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Dedicated to protecting and improving the health and environment of the people of Colorado

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## PRIMARY CARE OFFICE Shortage Designation Overview

The Shortage Designation Branch in the **Health Resources and Services Administration** (HRSA), develops and implements criteria to determine whether or not a geographic area, population group, or safety-net clinic facility qualifies as a Health Professional Shortage Area or a Medically Underserved Area.

#### Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA)

A HPSA is defined as a geographic area, a population group (such as low-income), a correctional facility, a state or county mental health hospital, or a private public or nonprofit facility that can demonstrate a shortage of health professionals in the service area. HPSAs can be created for primary care, dental health, or mental health.

Components: A HPSA application requires four components for a geographic area or low-income population request.

- 1) The area must be rational for the delivery of health services, for example, a municipality or county
- 2) A qualified population to provider ratio must be met or exceeded (ratios are different for geographic area, low-income population, primary care, dental health and mental health designations)
- 3) Health care resources in contiguous areas must be shown to be over utilized, excessively distant, or otherwise inaccessible to the population of the service area
- 4) The nearest source of care, that is not in a HPSA, must be determined to illustrate relative isolation from care

Facility HPSAs must show that they provide care to the residents of a HPSA and meet insufficient capacity criteria such as the number of visits per full time equivalent provider, wait times for appointments, or emergency room usage.

HPSA scores reflect the level of provider shortage for a service area. On a scare of 0 to 25, higher scores indicate higher relative need than lower scores.

### Medically Underserved Areas/Populations (MUA/MUP)

A MUA is defined as geographic area where residents have a shortage of health services. A MUP is a population group within a certain geographic area that faces high barriers to health care access.

**Components:** The MUA/P application requires several basic elements for a geographic or population request (health care resources in contiguous areas are not part of the criteria).

- 1) The area must be rational for the delivery of health services
- 2) Population data points associated with poor access to care (poverty level, population over age 65, infant mortality rate, population to provider ratio) are applied to a formula to derive an Index of Medical Underservice score. A score of 62 or less is required on a 100 point scale, where a lower score is associated with higher need.

#### Procedure

Contact the Primary Care Office <u>before</u> beginning an application. During the process, applicants are asked to survey providers in the area or facility because familiarity and connection to the community generally improves data collection. The Primary Care Office completes the analysis and submits the application to the Shortage Designation Branch using a federal online application system. The analysis, submission and approval process usually takes two to three months.

### Benefits of HPSA or MUA Designation

Once an area or population group is designated, the benefits of that designation are available to any organization or person in that area. More than 34 federal and state programs depend on shortage designation to determine program eligibility or funding preference. Select examples:

Program	Benefit	Designation Required
National Health Service Corps	Scholarship, loan repayment	HPSA
Medicare Incentive Program	10% bonus on Medicare Part B	Geographic HPSA
Certified Rural Health Clinics	Cost-based reimbursement	HPSA or MUA
Federally Qualified Health Centers	Federal funding Cost-based reimbursement	MUA/P
J-1 Visa Waiver/National Interest Waiver Physicians	Recruitment of physicians	HPSA or MUA/P
Colorado Health Service Corps	Loan repayment	HPSA

For more information about shortage area designations or the Primary Care Office contact:

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